

Amendments to the Claims

Please cancel claims 58-71.

Please add new claims 72- 86 as shown below.

Listing of Claims

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

72. (New) A database searching apparatus comprising:
a search engine operative to provide search results including search listings according to rank; and
a database searchable by the search engine and including a plurality of search listings, at least some search listings being associated with advertisers, an advertiser-associated search listing including
a search term specified by the advertiser, and
a desired rank specified by the advertiser for a the search listing and a maximum cost per click (maximum CPC) and a cost per click (CPC) associated with the desired rank for the search term and the advertiser,
the search engine being operative, when the advertiser enters a new search listing or changes the maximum CPC of a search listing,
to adjust the CPC of the advertiser's search listing to maintain the desired rank,
to move the search listing to the highest rank possible without exceeding the maximum CPC of the advertiser's search listing,
to maintain the CPC of the advertiser's search listing less than or equal to the maximum CPC of the advertiser's search listing,
to set the CPC of the advertiser's search listing no higher than necessary,
and

to avoid setting the CPC of the advertiser's search listing so that desired ranks and CPCs of other advertisers are maintained.

73. (New) The database searching apparatus of claim 72 wherein the database further stores a timestamp associated with each desired rank, the timestamp indicated time the search listing was entered or changed.

74. (New) The database searching apparatus of claim 73 wherein the search engine is configured to
receive a search request,
locate one or more search listings having a matching relationship with the search request; and
order search results from the one or more search listings using the CPC associated with the one or more search listings.

75. (New) The database searching apparatus of claim 72 further comprising:
an account manager accessible by the advertiser to vary at least one of the maximum cost per click and the desired rank for a respective bid/desired rank.

76. (New) The database searching apparatus of claim 75 wherein the account manager is further accessible by the advertiser to vary the maximum cost per click for two or more possible ranks specified by the advertiser.

77. (New) The database searching apparatus of claim 72 further comprising:
one or more software agents configured to
receive advertiser bid information, and
act on the advertiser bid information to adjust the cost per click for a specified search listing.

78. (New) The database searching apparatus of claim 77 wherein the one or more software agents is configured to
increase current cost per click of the specified search listing if the rank of the specified search listing can be improved without exceeding the maximum cost per click; and
decrease the current cost per click of the specified search listing without moving the specified search listing to a rank worse than the desired rank.

79. (New) The database searching apparatus of claim 78 wherein the one or more software agents is configured to decrease the current cost per click of the specified search listing only if no other search listing will have its respective current cost per click increased to decrease the rank of the specified search listing.

80. (New) A method for managing search listings in a search database, the method comprising:
storing one or more search listings for an advertiser, each search listing including a search term, a cost per click and maximum cost per click chargeable to the advertiser and associated desired rank desired by the advertiser, each search listing displayable in a display rank with other search listings according to the cost per click;
receiving advertiser bid information;
storing the advertiser bid information; and
automatically adjusting the cost per click for selected search listings when the display rank for the selected search listings changes, including
sorting the selected search listings according to its desired rank,
for the sorted selected search listings, if two adjacent search listings for a given desired rank are competitive, leaving the relative positions of the two adjacent search listings unchanged based on desired rank and cost per click, and

if the two adjacent search listings for the desired rank are not competitive,
determining if the current rank for a current selected search listing
is less than the desired rank for the current selected search listing
and if so, reducing cost per click for the current selected search
listing to reduce the current rank to the desired rank without going
below a minimum cost per click.

81. (New) The method of claim 80 wherein automatically adjusting further
comprises:

if the current rank for a current selected search listing is less than the desired
rank for the current selected search listing, leaving the relative positions of
the two adjacent search listings unchanged based on desired rank and the
cost per click for the current search listing.

82. (New) The method of claim 80 wherein storing comprises storing at least
one of a maximum cost per click, a desired rank, and a cost per click for each search
listing, each respective cost per click being associated with a respective desired rank.

83. (New) The method of claim 80 wherein storing further comprises storing
timestamp data associated with one of a time when the advertiser bid information was
stored and a time when the advertiser bid information was received.

84. (New) The method of claim 83 wherein automatically adjusting further
comprises:

if two adjacent search listings for a given desired rank are competitive,
comparing timestamps of the two adjacent search listings and setting the
cost per click for the current selected search listing in accordance with the
earlier timestamp; and

if the two adjacent search listings for the desired rank are not competitive and the
current rank for a current selected search listing is not less than the

desired rank for the current selected search listing, comparing timestamps of the two adjacent search listings and setting the cost per click for the current selected search listing in accordance with the earlier timestamp.

85. (New) A method for determining cost per click and search listings to be associated with each rank position of a plurality of rank positions of a search result display, the method comprising:

- initializing a workspace;

- identifying a winning search listing for each rank position among active search listings, wherein identifying a winning search listing comprises:

 - determining a highest active bid amount in the workspace;

 - among search listings having a bid amount matching the highest active bid amount, determining the lowest rank specified by the search listings;

 - among search listings having a rank matching the lowest rank, identifying search listings having the highest active bid amount at the lowest rank; and

 - identifying as the winning search listing an identified search listing having an earliest time stamp;

- inserting the winning search listing in a list of winners at the rank;

- if the winning search listing is not a price protected search listing, assigning the cost per click of the winning search listing for the rank to be a bid amount specified for the rank by an advertiser associated with the winning search listing; and

- inactivating other bids of the winning search listing and other bids at the rank of the winning listing.

86. (New) The method of claim 85 further comprising:

if the winning search listing is a price protected search listing, selecting a competing search listing having a next-highest bid amount at the rank of the winning search listing;

if the winning search listing has an earlier time stamp than a time stamp of the competing search listing, assigning the cost per click of the winning search listing for the rank to be the cost per click of the competing search listing; and

otherwise, assigning the cost per click of the winning search listing for the rank to be the cost per click of the competing search listing plus a minimum cost per click increment.